

One of the most attractive miniature atlases published in the eighteenth century contains fifty two maps: 'Drawn and Engrav'd By J. Gibson from the Best Authorities Revis'd, Corrected and Improv'd, By Eman: Bowen Geographer to His Majesty.' Measuring about 95 x 63 mm., the plates are numbered 1-52, just outside the border and all finely done, with lovely little rococo title cartouches and quite long topographical notes.



The high proportion of them devoted to America was most unusual at this time when a European emphasis was normal in a world atlas. Engraved for John Newbery, the outstanding publisher of children's books, they have an interesting history spanning half a century. The maps were later copied in both England and America, though these later plates do not match the quality of the original ones (see 1780 & 1798):

*The World; Europe; Asia; Africa; North America; South America.*

*Great Britain and Ireland; England; Scotland; Ireland; The United Provinces; The Netherlands; France; Spain and Portugal; Italy; Switzerland with its Allies; Germany divided into Circles; The North East part of Germany; The North West part of Germany; South East part of Germany; South West part of Germany; Hungary; Poland; Prussia; Denmark; Sweden and Norway; Russia in Europe; Turkey in Europe; Naples and Sicily.*

*Turkey in Asia; Persia; India on both Sides the Ganges; East India Islands; Russia in Asia; China.*

*Barbary; Negroland and Guinea; Egypt, Nubia, and Abissinia.*

*Nova Scotia; New England; New York and Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania Maryland and Virginia; The English and French Settlements in Nth. America; Carolina and Georgia; Newfoundland; Island of Cape Breton; West Indies; Canada or New France; Mexico or New Spain; Brasil; Paraguay and Tucuman; Peru.*

There were three issues dated January 2nd 1758 and they are often found with neat contemporary outline colour, unlike the later editions which are usually uncoloured. In the first issue the dimensions for Africa were wrongly given as only '900 miles in length, 290 in breadth' and an errata note was engraved at the foot of the index page. The fifty-six pages were not engraved individually but several per plate. Because it would have been a simple matter to alter the figures, it would seem to be likely that the print run containing Africa was completed before the error was noticed and rather than waste all the sheets, a correction was instead added to another as yet unprinted plate. It is unlikely that there was an earlier state of the atlas with the error and no correction, which might have been the case had there been a correction slip inserted instead.

The two plates were then retouched for the second issue with the figures corrected on *Africa* to 4850 and 3960 and the note erased from the index page. The first issue also had an advertisement at the very end of the book: 'Speedily will be Publish'd in the same Size of this Volume, the Counties of England and Wales. Drawn & Engraved by J: Gibson, Engraver at No. 18 Georges-Court, Clerkenwell.' As the second issue did not have this, it may well be that it was omitted because this was published when or after the county atlas appeared in 1759 and not the same size after all, but almost an inch taller (see 1759a).

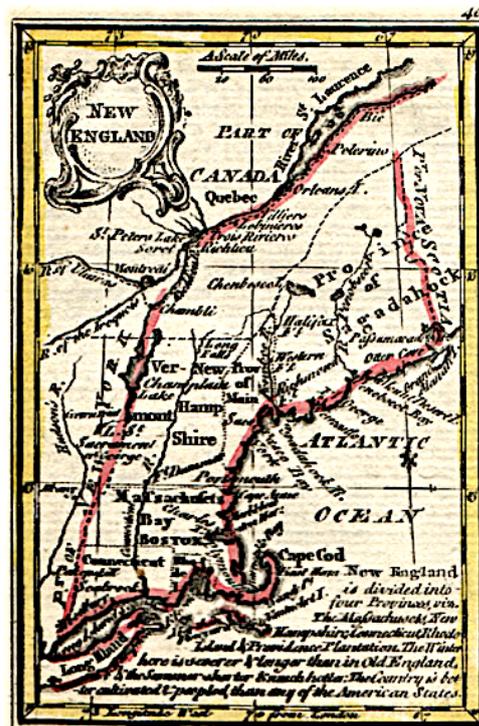
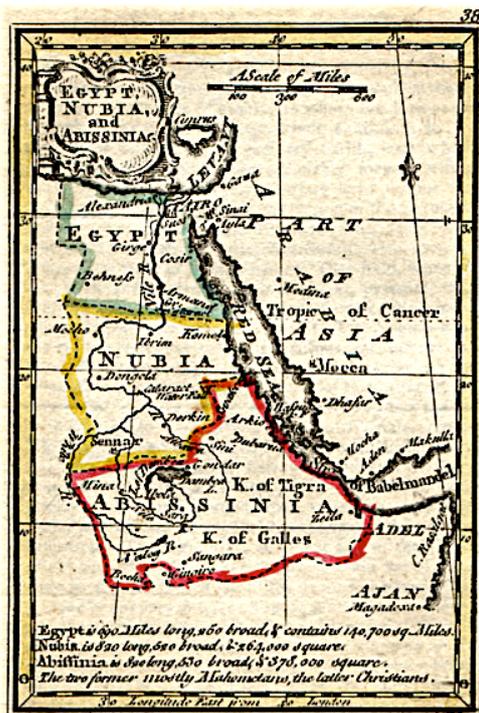


At an unknown time, but prior to the next issue, the plates were modified to print a set of playing cards. The only known pack is now in the Deutsches Spielkartenmuseum, a few miles south of Stuttgart. Tiny standard playing card designs, 14 x 9 mm., were engraved in a corner of each map, usually at upper right but sometimes at lower left.

These were then all carefully removed and the plates made good for the third issue of the atlas. However, upon close examination, the effects of the retouching can still be seen on many maps and are fairly easy to find on some, for example *The World* (text in the north-west spandrel completely re-engraved), *Scotland*, *Poland*, *Nova Scotia*, *Carolina* and *Georgia* and *West Indies*. John Newbery died on December 22nd 1767.

The second edition of the atlas was published by Newbery's successors in 1774. This featured a letterpress title-page and preface, with the maps on the verso instead of the recto, inserted between 54 leaves of descriptive letterpress. It was reprinted in 1779.

Another new edition in 1792 had the same format but the engraved title-page and preface returned and some maps were updated, e.g. the coastlines of Australia, New Zealand and North America completed on *The World*. There were text deletions on *South East part of Germany* and *South West part of Germany*, with some boundary changes on the latter. *The English and French Settlements in Nth. America* was retitled *The United States of America* (see above and below) and this new name now also appeared on *North America* (coastline completed) and *Canada or New France*.



It is unknown who issued the final edition, which just like the first was engraved throughout with the maps on the recto and without letterpress. The outer margins of leaves often have nicks suggesting they were originally sewn on that side and a few with watermarks dated 1802 or 1807 have been seen. The plates now show signs of wear and strangely, in at least one copy, some of the old playing card designs can be seen well enough to count the suit marks.

It would seem likely that Gibson's *Atlas minimus* was in print for fifty years and most of the variants are listed in S. Roscoe's fine bibliography: *John Newbery and his successors 1740-1814*. Wormley, Five Owls Press, 1973 (J146). The playing cards are illustrated in a work by Sylvia Mann and David Kingsley: *Playing cards depicting maps of the British Isles, and of English and Welsh counties*. London, Map Collectors' Circle, 1972 (plate XXI).

*Atlas minimus, or a New set of pocket maps of the several empires, kingdoms and states of the known world, with historical extracts relative to each.* London, John Newbery, 1758, 1758 i.e. (1759-176?), 1758 i.e. (176?-1767).

pack of playing cards. (London, John Newbery, 176?).

*Atlas minimus illustratus: containing fifty-two pocket maps of the world.* London, Thomas Carnan & Francis Newbery, 1774, 1779.

*Atlas minimus, or a New set of pocket maps of the several empires, kingdoms and states of the known world, with historical extracts relative to each. A New edition, corrected.* London, C.D. Piguenit, 1792; (Piguenit's name & address imperfectly erased), 1792 i.e. (1802), (1807).

